
THE MUD VALLEY SITE: A LATE PALAEO-INDIAN LOCALITY IN HOLMES COUNTY, OHIO¹

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ABSTRACT

The Mud Valley Site is a multi-component locality at which two distinct Late Palaeo-Indian components have been isolated on the basis of typological analysis of the projectile point assemblages. These components are dated on grounds of analogy with similar and related assemblages of known date from other parts of the Great Lakes region. An 'unfluted fluted' point component is dated from ca. 6,000 to 8,000 B.C., and a later lanceolate point component is dated within a range of 5,000 to 7,000 B.C. These two components are culturally and chronologically distinct, representing two distinct occupations at the site.

The Mud Valley Site is located in Section 17 of Walnut Creek township in eastern Holmes County, a few hundred feet southeast of Mud Valley School above the right bank of Walnut Creek. The site is situated on a spur, at an elevation ranging from 1075 to 1100 ft, overlooking the confluence of Goose Creek and Walnut Creek. At the confluence, the elevation above sea level is approximately 975 ft. From the base of the spur, in the floodplain of Walnut Creek, to the elevation at which the site is centered, the terrain rises sharply by 100 ft over a horizontal distance of circa 1500 ft.

Walnut Creek, from the confluence of Goose Creek on, meanders for a distance of ca. 4 miles in a northeasterly direction through a narrow valley, until it joins, near Dundee in Tuscarawas County, the South Fork of Sugar Creek. After its junction with the North Fork, Sugar Creek winds its way to the Tuscarawas River, which it joins in the Canal Dover-New Philadelphia area of Tuscarawas County. The Tuscarawas River, in turn, is one of the headwater streams of the Muskingum which flows into the Ohio at Marietta, in Washington County.

The Mud Valley Site and the area adjacent to the locality are well to the south of the Illinoian and Wisconsin glacial boundaries. Both Goose and Walnut Creeks have their genesis south of these boundaries as well. In view of the fact

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that the Mud Valley Site is not located on a glacially controlled feature, the Pleistocene history of the area involved is of little significance. Certainly, by the time the site was first occupied, Goose Creek and Walnut Creek valleys had essentially assumed their present configuration. The implimentiferous area of the locality is divided by the 1100 ft contour line into two geologically significant parts. The area below that line belongs to the Alleghany formation of the Pennsylvanian System, while the area above that contour is part of the Pottsville formation of the Pennsylvanian System (see folded map in White and Lamborn, 1949). This geological differentiation within the site does not seem to have had any effect upon the human occupation. There is at least one spring within the area of the site.

The entire area of the Mud Valley Site is presently under cultivation. Artifacts occur in the plow zone, but there seems to be no depth to the deposits. The density of tools and debitage is rather low; thus, the situation compares unfavorably with the vast amounts of material found on the Walhonding Valley sites in Coshocton County, Ohio (Prufer, 1963). Undoubtedly, this reflects the peculiar ecological conditions in the Walhonding Valley, where the Warsaw flint pits seem to have been the *raison d'être* for the many prolific sites in the valley proper, sites which almost exclusively represent workshops. The Mud Valley Site, being at a

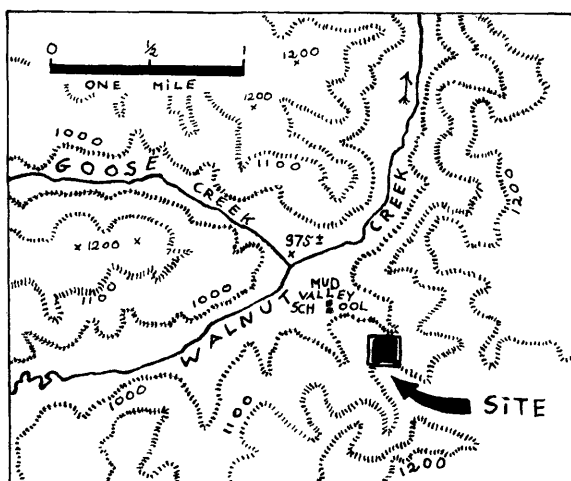


FIGURE 1. Location map of the Mud Valley Site in Holmes Co., Ohio.

distance of about 25 miles from the Warsaw flint pits, clearly does not represent a true workshop, though there is evidence that here, too, some Late Palaeo-Indian tools were actually manufactured. The flint raw material was, with very few exceptions, derived from the Warsaw flint pits.

This report is based upon the material in the Mahlon J. Schrock collection in Sugar Creek, Ohio, and upon my own investigations at the site. Additional material not considered here is contained in various local collections. Clearly, the Mud Valley Site is a multi-component locality, though the Late Palaeo-Indian remains account for a large proportion of the total material recovered here. As in the case of the McConnell Site in the Walhonding Valley (Prufer, 1963) and other similar localities, the various components can be isolated only on the basis of typology, using known, more or less discrete assemblages such as that from the Sawmill Site in Erie County (Prufer and Baby, 1963: 32-6; Smith, 1960) as a measure for artifact attribution. Applying this method of analysis, which has been described elsewhere (Prufer, 1963: 12-21), two distinct Palaeo-Indian components can be isolated at the Mud Valley Site.

On the one hand, there are the stemless and square-stemmed lanceolate points

characteristic of such sites as McConnell (Prufer, 1963), Sawmill (Prufer and Baby, 1963; Smith, 1960), and Stringtown (Prufer and Baby, 1963)—to mention only a few. On the other hand, the Mud Valley Site produced a significant series of 'unfluted fluted' points similar to the material from such sites as Mathewson in Hardin County, Ohio (Prufer and Baby, 1963), and Hi-Lo in Ionia County, Michigan (Fitting, 1963). At the latter site, the term *Hi-Lo point* has been coined for this type of projectile.

The endscrapers and the single retouched blade may belong into either of the Late Palaeo-Indian complexes.

The question arises, whether or not the two Late Palaeo-Indian components at the Mud Valley Site should be considered contemporaneous or whether they represent two distinct occupations separated by a time gap. The evidence from a number of other sites suggests that the latter alternative is, in the light of present knowledge, the more acceptable one. On the other hand, there may have been an overlap between the two components similar to that postulated for the Early Palaeo-Indian fluted point tradition and the subsequent 'unfluted fluted' point assemblages of the earlier Late Palaeo-Indian tradition. This view finds some tentative support in the fact that the Mud Valley Site did not yield a single true fluted point, the presence of which might have suggested, as in the case of the Mathewson Site (Prufer and Baby, 1963), temporal proximity and overlap with the classic fluted point horizon. At the Mud Valley Site, only 'unfluted fluted' points were represented. It could be argued that this is indicative of a later temporal position of this earlier Late Palaeo-Indian complex, representing a time horizon when the true fluted points had finally disappeared. In view of the fact that the discrete sites of this complex known from Ohio and Michigan never produced later Late Palaeo-Indian unstemmed and stemmed lanceolates, the Mud Valley Site, if indeed it represents a single mixed occupation, would have to represent a very late phase of the 'unfluted fluted' point horizon, flourishing when the lanceolate assemblages were already in existence.

It is of interest to note that the Mud Valley Site, with its possibly mixed assemblage representing two Late Palaeo-Indian traditions, is located at not too great a distance from the Upper Ohio Valley sites, which have yielded curiously mixed, and as yet poorly understood, assemblages of stemmed and unstemmed lanceolate points that have been named *Steubenville points* (Mayer-Oakes, 1955). Many of the points in the former category clearly are 'unfluted fluted' specimens. The age, affiliations, definitions, and indeed the very nature of the assemblages are as yet in dispute (Mayer-Oakes, 1955; 1959; Dragoo, 1959; Prufer and Baby, 1963). One of the major stumbling blocks here is the definition of the two crucial artifact types, *Steubenville Stemmed* and *Steubenville Lanceolate*. They have never been properly defined for the area in which they are supposedly characteristic, and it is clear from the literature that a great number of vaguely similar types have been lumped in these categories. Ritchie (1961) duplicates this lumping process in attempting to define Steubenville types for New York State, moreover suggesting improbably late dates for some of these points. What is of possible importance here is the off-chance that, in the Upper Ohio Valley, some sites such as East Steubenville may, among many other cultural materials, have yielded true associations of tools belonging to the two Late Palaeo-Indian complexes which further west tend to be mutually exclusive. Conceivably such assemblages, if indeed they are discrete assemblages, represent a very late holdover of the Late Palaeo-Indian traditions, a kind of catchall of many things surviving in an area that is clearly peripheral to the classic Late Palaeo-Indian area of occupation. This, indeed, has been suggested by Mayer-Oakes (1959), but the argument, while theoretically sound, suffers from the absence of clear definitions of what is to be included in the crucial Steubenville projectile point types.

The argument for two chronologically quite distinct occupations of the Mud Valley Site can be summed up as follows: In the first place there is the evidence

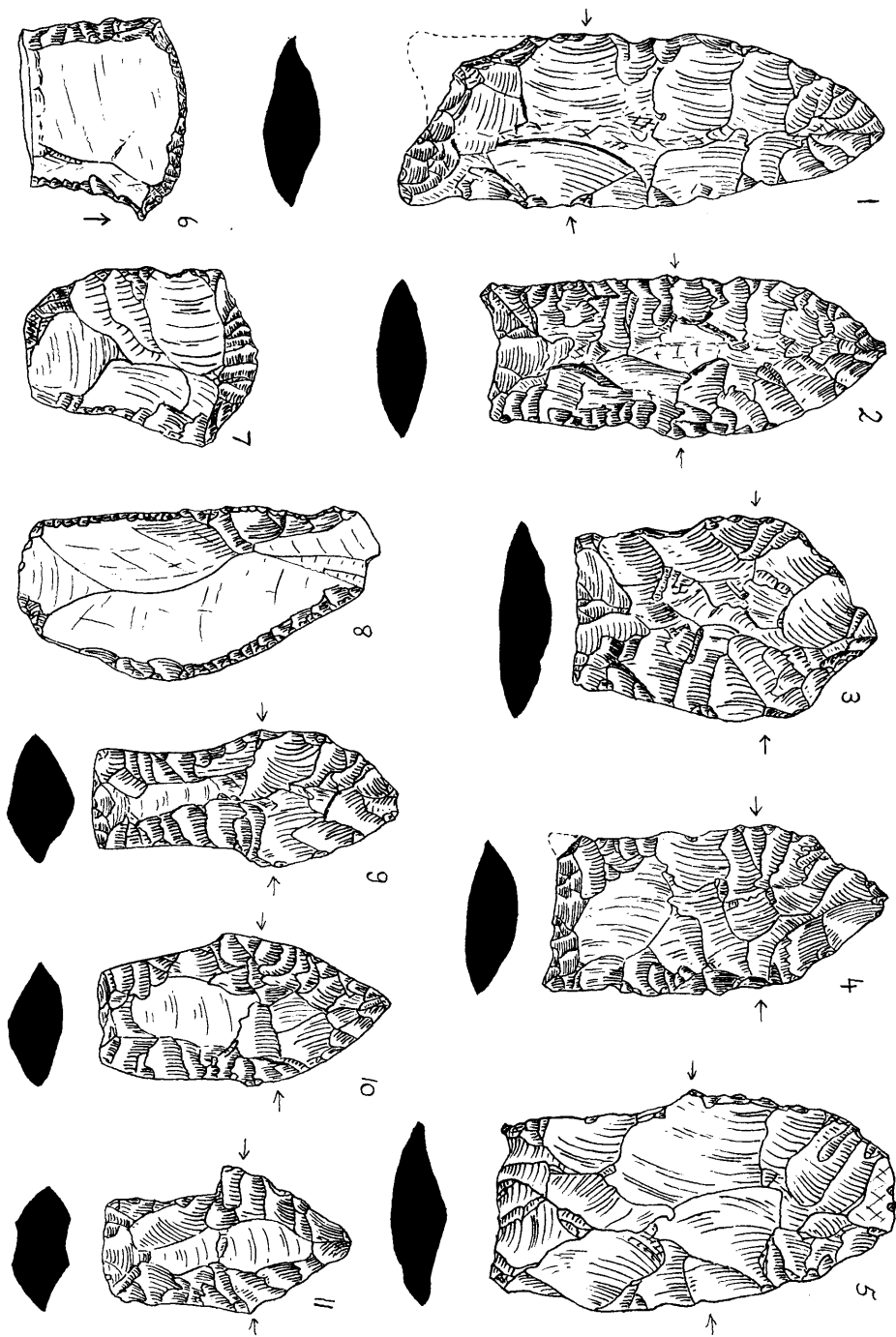


FIGURE 2. Artifacts from the Mud Valley Site.

from other sites to the west which suggests again and again a mutual exclusiveness of the two cultural complexes. This exclusiveness can at present best be interpreted as being indicative of a chronological separation between the diverse assemblages. This argument is supported by typological considerations which place the 'unfluted fluted' points in close proximity to the true fluted points, while this is in no sense true of the stemmed and unstemmed lanceolate materials. They are closely related to the many western forms such as Agate Basin, Angostura, Milnesand, Browns Valley, etc. which are demonstrably late, and should represent the very tail end of the Palaeo-Indian cluster of traditions.

In terms of the Mud Valley Site, there is another factor that may argue for two separate Palaeo-Indian occupations. All of the 'unfluted fluted' material represents specimens that had been completed, though a number of them had been broken subsequent to their completion. On the other hand, the lanceolate material contains numerous clearly unfinished specimens similar to the unfinished artifacts from the McConnell Site. It seems to me that this discrepancy could be interpreted as evidence for two separate occupations by two culturally quite distinct groups. If it were otherwise, one would expect either nothing but completed specimens or an even distribution of completed and uncompleted tools of all artifact types.

The artifact series probably attributable to the Late Palaeo-Indian horizon(s) include the following tool types.

1. *Stemless lanceolate points*: 23 specimens (fig. 3: 12-17; 4: 20-23). These artifacts conform in all respects to the type definitions established at the McConnell Site specifically and for the Ohio material in general. (Prufer, 1963: 15-16; Prufer and Baby, 1963: 20-21). With the exception of three specimens, one of which is made of Flint Ridge flint, all lanceolate points are made of Upper Mercer flint from the Warsaw flint pits in Coshocton County. Five specimens are unfinished (fig. 4: 23); two further specimens may possibly have been unfinished when they broke. They lack the lateral grinding generally so characteristic of the completed lanceolate points.

2. *Square-stemmed lanceolate points*: 5 specimens (fig. 4: 18-19). These tools conform to the type definition given by Prufer and Baby (1963: 21-22). Three points have a basal spur. In the remaining two cases this feature could not be identified because of the points' damaged condition. All specimens are made of Upper Mercer flint.

3. *'Unfluted fluted' or Hi-Lo points*: 8 specimens (fig. 2: 1-5). A brief definition of this type has been given by Prufer and Baby (1963: 22). Similar forms are illustrated and discussed in a general way by Quimby (1960: 36, fig. 14). Fitting (1963) has formally defined the type which he designates Hi-Lo point. Furthermore, a number of forms lumped in the Steubenville Lanceolate category (Mayer-Oakes, 1955; Ritchie, 1961) are clearly identical with this series of projectile points, though equally clearly, other so-called Steubenville Lanceolates are not. One of the problems in defining the range of the 'unfluted fluted' points is their considerable morpho-typological variability. They all share a general, fairly close resemblance to fluted points. As a rule they are much cruder; true fluting does not occur; and, with notable exceptions, these points are much smaller than fluted points, rarely exceeding 2 inches in length. Still, it is quite obvious that these forms are related by descent to the true fluted points. Within the criteria outlined above, qualitative and dimensional variations can be quite marked, without apparently implying cultural and/or chronological differences; at presumably discrete sites all forms tend to occur together. Basal and lateral grinding is present in most cases. All specimens from the Mud Valley Site are made of Upper Mercer flint.

4. *End-scrapers on short flakes*: 4 specimens (fig. 2: 6-7; 4: 24). All four specimens have spurs, though this feature is broken on two of the scrapers. One of the specimens may have been made on a true blade; this specimen too appears

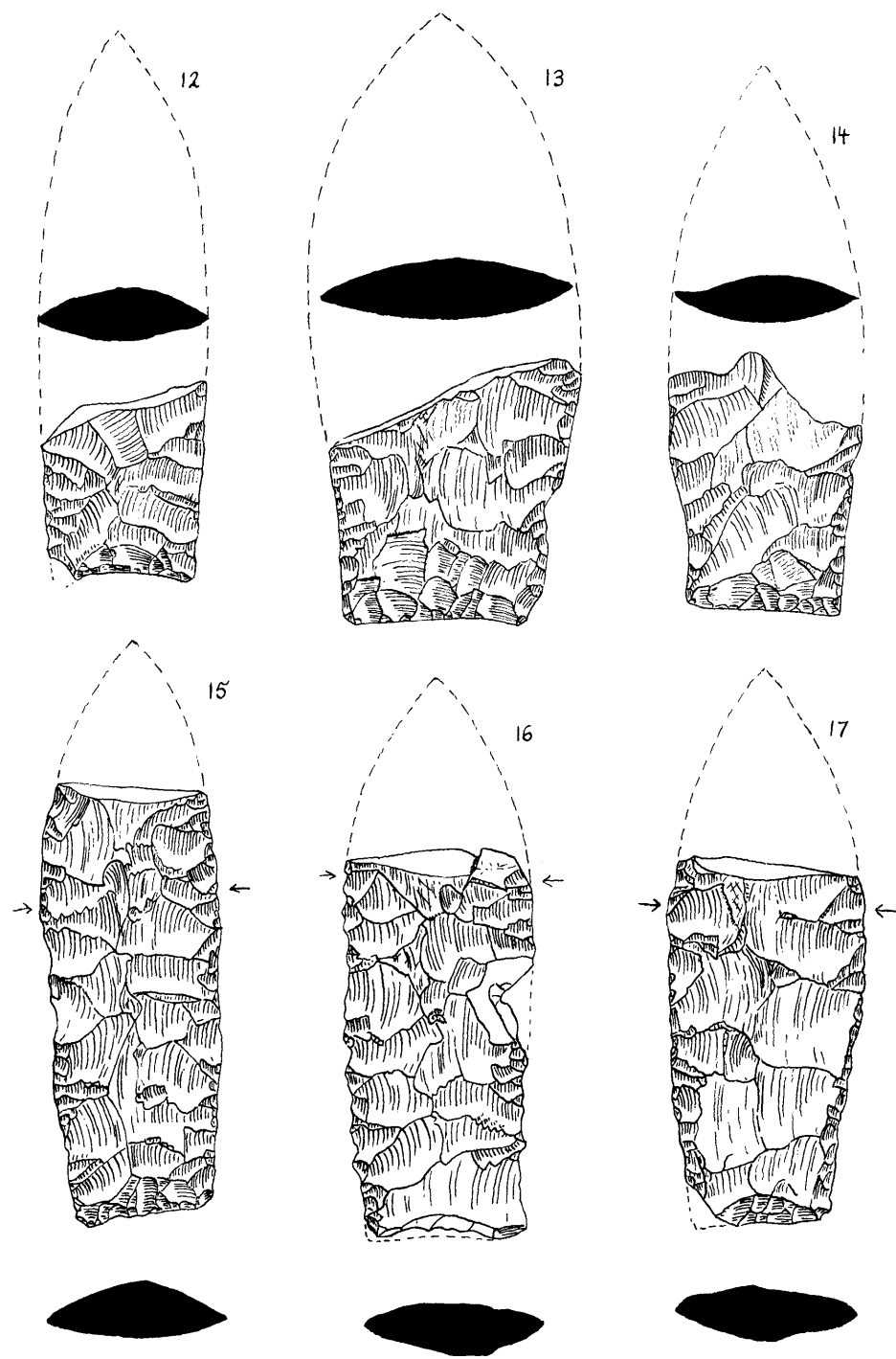


FIGURE 3. Artifacts from the Mud Valley Site.

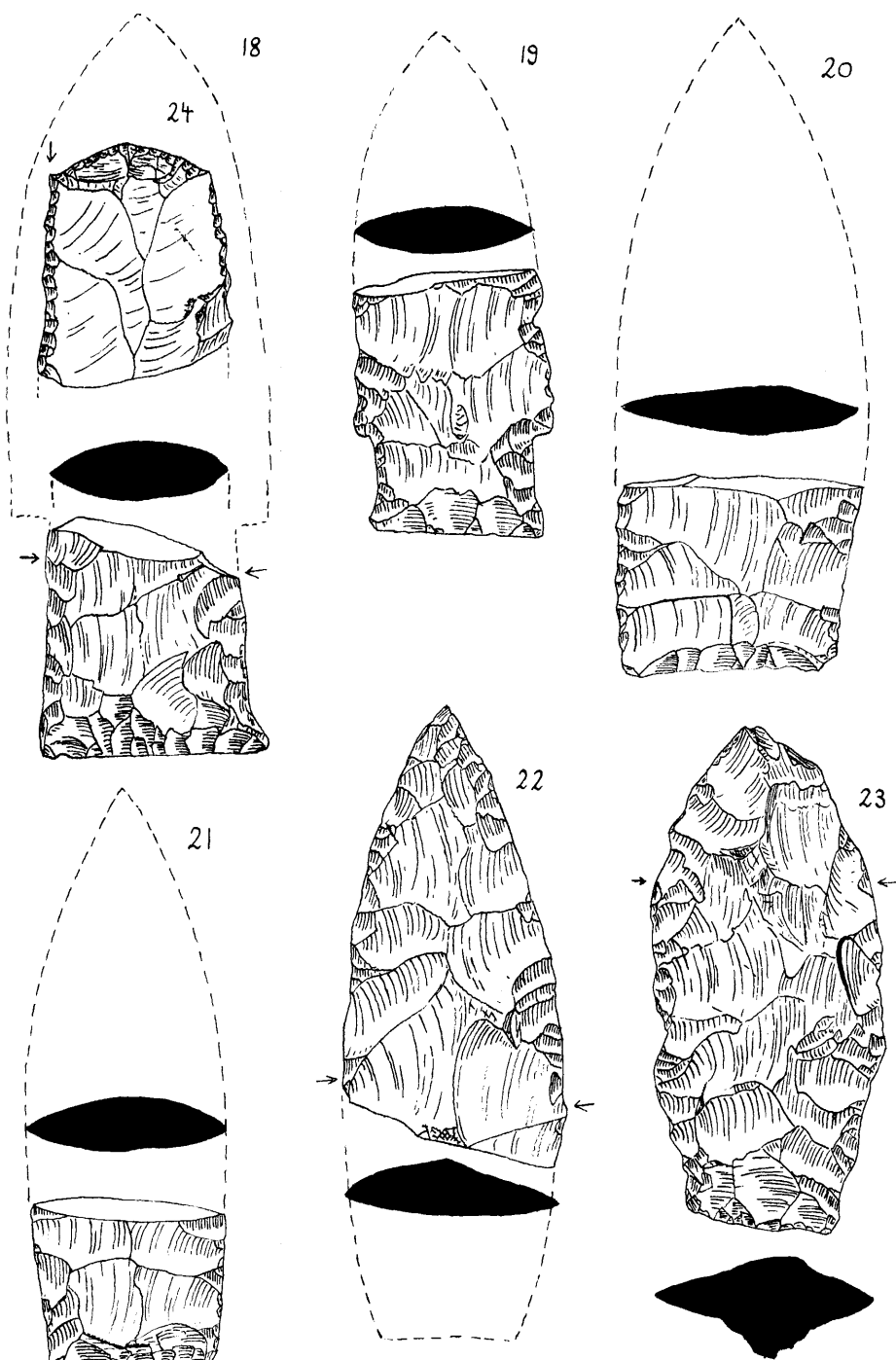


FIGURE 4. Artifacts from the Mud Valley Site.

to have been slightly weathered (fig. 4: 24). Three other small scrapers may or may not have been part of the Palaeo-Indian series. The four demonstrably spurred specimens here considered part of the ancient occupation are all made of Upper Mercer flint.

5. *True parallel-sided unifacial blades*: 1 specimen (fig. 2: 8). With the possible exception of one of the endscrapers, this is the only true blade found at the Mud Valley Site. The seeming absence of this type is of interest since true blades are quite characteristic of some of the lanceolate point assemblages, such as that from the McConnell Site (Prufer, 1963). Blades have also been reported from sites characterized by 'unfluted fluted' points (see Mathewson Site, Prufer and Baby, 1963: 40, fig. 24). The Mud Valley blade is made of Upper Mercer flint.

6. *Thick small points with short blades and long broad stems*: 9 specimens (fig. 2: 9-11). These points may or may not belong into any of the Palaeo-Indian assemblages defined for Ohio. On the other hand, they cannot, at this time, be associated reliably with any later archaeological complex. Some specimens resemble the forms from McConnell (Prufer, 1963: 43, fig. 11: 57, 60) and Sawmill (Smith, 1960: 90, fig. 5m). Others, while retaining the characteristic features of thickness, lateral and basal grinding, and the blade/stem size ratio, are somewhat dissimilar to the definition established on the basis of the McConnell and Sawmill specimens (Prufer, 1963: 17). They are more slender and/or somewhat smaller, with occasionally exaggeratedly small, triangular blades, and nearly 'hypertrophied' stems. Griffin (personal communication) noted a vague resemblance of certain of these specimens to one of the projectile point types from Faulkner in Southern Illinois (see MacNeish, 1948: 237, fig. 47: 6). All but two of the Mud Valley points are made of Upper Mercer flint.

While it is obviously impossible to determine the absolute age of the Mud Valley Site material, it is suggested here on grounds of analogy that the earlier 'unfluted fluted' point component dates from ca. 6,000 to 8,000 B.C. The later lanceolate materials should date within a range of 5,000 to 7,000 B.C. These dates take into consideration the possibility of a true cultural and chronological overlap, and they are in line with the age estimates for similar and related assemblages in other parts of the Great Lakes region (Fitting, 1963; Quimby, 1960; Peske, 1963; Prufer, 1963). The possibility of a much later 'hangover' of presumably similar or reminiscent materials has been suggested for the Upper Ohio Valley (Mayer-Oakes, 1955; 1959), but this remains to be demonstrated.

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